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ABSTRACT

Courses By Newspaper is a national program that offers college-level instruction through the newspapers. The courses have as a target audience the adult learner who has never attended college, the college graduate, and the college dropout. The newspaper lessons are distributed to participating newspapers by the Copley News Service. The newspapers carry the course without charge. The original course is organized and developed by an authority in the field. At this point, 264 newspapers carry the courses, with the number of credit students for the first course numbering 5,000. What makes national newspaper courses so unique is that they offer every citizen the chance to study with the nation's best scholars. (Author/PG)

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COURSES BY NEWSPAPER--AND THE MISSING ADJECTIVE

I'll first try to define "Courses By Newspaper" with a few recent quotes from others:

A potential student from New England: "It was 32 below zero when my children left for school this morning. There is not a house or a light in sight. Only mountains and snow. Your college by newspaper is a jewel of an idea. Please, if you can, send information. We are so isolated."

A credit enrollee from the University of Nevada, Reno: "The great strength of the course, I believe, is the presentation of diverse opinions from specialists of varied backgrounds, without giving the 'right' or accepted viewpoint we are expected to assume. It causes students to synthesize opinions, think and make their own judgments. What better education!"

The Managing Editor of the Dayton Daily News: "The class is up to about 150 now, which we consider excellent. One fellow, about whom we've done a story, is graduating from college on the basis of the course. An additional effect, we've found, is that the University of Dayton and Wright State have been able to talk a number of people into taking high school completion and college preparatory courses."

The School for Continuing Education, University of Virginia, Falls Church: "This Center, as the regional arm of the University of Virginia, participated in the first Course By Newspaper, 'America and the Future of Man.' The response was good--we had 102 participants.

"Our students, busy adults most of whom are employed and have family responsibilities, appreciate having a high quality course available to them to which they are not required to drive and which they can complete at their own convenience."

Now it's my turn to try: Courses By Newspaper is a nation l program which offers college-level instruction through the newspapers.

The course has three target audiences:

Audience 1. Any person can read the "lectures" in his newspaper and, if he wishes, start to stretch his mind, start to learn that learning itself can be stimulating, exciting, mind-blowing, pure pleasure, and many other things--all good, I believe. If he was turned off in school, he can find (as so many do) that his added years have changed his attitude. He may be ready to come back. Also there are many other adults who honestly believe that education is for kids, and is forever unavailable to those who have passed 18 or 21. We'd like to get them back along with those who cannot leave their homes for one reason or another.

Audience 2. If this person has already discovered that education can continue throughout life quite easily and pleasantly, he might wish to purchase the reader and study guide which are designed to accompany the course. He stretches many more wrinkles out of his mind all for the sheer pleasure of learning.

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Audience 3. Some, already addicted to the magic of learning, may also wish to enroll for credit in a local participating college or university. They read the newspaper lessons, the book, and the study guide, and attend two "contact" sessions with the local teacher/coordinator.

Today one of the many plusses of going to school at home is that the student saves on gasoline. A much bigger one is that the taxpayers--you and I--save the cost of new buildings. We taxpayers should be pleased, therefore, that our government, through its Senators and Representatives, originally funded Courses By Newspaper through the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The course was developed by University Extension, University of California, San Diego, but is presented across the country by local colleges and universities. The student receives local credit, which is usable, not credit from afar, which often isn't.

Once a week each local newspaper publishes one in the series of 1400-word lectures by scholars of national reputation who can also write well. The paper also lists the name, address, and phone number of the local school or schools giving credit.

The local college or university provides its own teacher/coordinator who conducts the two "contact" sessions at the mid-point and after the final newspaper essay. The teacher meets twice with the enrolled students, thus assuring them that they are working with a real live human being who is interested in them and their progress. He gives his own lectures, answers questions, and gives an exam or a take-home assignment. He also assigns grades.

The newspaper lessons are distributed to participating newspapers without charge by the Copley News Service. The first newspaper to ask from each city is accepted.

The newspapersalso carry the course without charge. Again a break for the taxpayer, the school, and the student.

How can colleges and universities across the country approve someone else's course for credit? First, each original course is organized and developed by a truly great teacher. I believe that no course is better than its teacher, and we try to get the best. Second, the quality of all academic materials is supervised by an Academic Advisory Committee of five professors from a variety of disciplines.

What's new about Courses By Newspaper? Obviously the method of delivery, the newspaper. Surprisingly, no one ever tried a national course by newspaper before, even though it's a natural. Unlike television and radio, the newspaper is delivered to the home in permanent form. It can be read at the student's convenience and at his own speed. It can also be re-read as many times as the individual needs. Remember Audience 1, those who are coming back to learning after years of being away

as well as those who have various handicaps that can make learning a slow process. They can review the lessons as often as they wish or need to. The fact that they may have to review the materials more times than the others is known only to themselves. Maybe we can salvage a few slow learners?

I suspect something else that's new is the response of newspapers (as well as schools and the general public). It was much larger than anticipated, despite the fact that we launched the first-ever, national Course By Newspaper at the time of what was almost the first-ever, national newsprint shortage.

So far 264 newspapers have participated in the first course, "America and the Future of Man," and others continue to come in. We have big city dailies, including locally the Chicago Tribune. We have dailies of all sizes, a few country weeklies, perhaps even your local newspaper. If not, and if you want to present this course or the next one, you are welcome to go out and recruit that paper.

Total circulation of the newspapers participating in the first course is currently 19,924,305. I'm told that readership is calculated at two or two and one-half times that figure.

One of the evaluations conducted, courtesy of the Exxon Education Foundation, had independent survey groups call subscribers at random in San Diego (the Evening Tribune) and Denver (the Post). They asked a series of questions designed to find out if the person who answered had read all or any or none of the lessons. Each survey found that one in four had read one or more newspaper lessons. That insures a minimum audience of 10 million if you take the lowest figure. If you take the highest figure plus the other family members reported to have read the lessons, the maximum becomes more than 16 million. Not a bad audience for a teacher used to lecturing to a few dozen students.

So far we have had 180 colleges and universities participating. Yes, some schools served several newspapers, some were on a one-to-one basis, and some newspapers served several schools. The Cincinnati Enquirer, as one example, had five participating colleges and universities.

The number of credit students reported to date is 4,967, but more reports are received each day. Total enrollment will exceed 5,000 certainly.

The boxed readers and study guides sold so far total 11,451, and again the number rises as new adoptions come in.

That's the preliminary report on the first course, an experiment that worked. Now we all have one more medium, the newspaper, available for our use to bring continuing education into the home to serve all our citizens.

What's in the future? A second course is set to begin in late September of this year, funded again by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Exxon Education Foundation. It is called "In Search of

THE AMERICAN DREAM," and its teacher and Academic Coordinator is Robert C. Elliott, Professor of Literature at UCSD and a member of the Academic Advisory Committee for the first course.

Dr. Elliott has selected to write with him Winthrop Jordan, UC, Berkeley; Michael Kammen, Cornell; William Goetzmann, University of Texas; Jay Martin, UC Irvine; and Robert Penn Warren. Total this time is 18 lectures (instead of the original 20), a semester-oriented number.

Those newspapers and colleges and universities successfully participating in the first course will be given the second course if they wish it. Otherwise, participation is wide open.

Beyond that, we don't know for sure. The first course is now being evaluated in several ways, and the National Endowment for the Humanities cannot make a decision to renew before the results are in.

Oh, yes, that missing adjective, which you've already filled in. It is "national" in the sense of nation-wide. "National Courses By Newspaper." I think the adjective is crucially important. May I again quote a potential student to tell you why?

From Orlando, Florida: "Just read about your 'College By Newspaper' project in Time. At 34 years of age, and just out of law school, I want to enroll. I never dreamed I could enjoy the lectures of faculty members from schools such as Harvard, Yale, etc."

That, I think, is what makes national courses so important. Every citizen then has the right to study with his nation's best teacher/scholars. This is no longer the exclusive right of a few.

The first Course By Newspaper exposed millions of people to professors from Harvard, Stanford, Michigan, Cal Tech, the London School of Economics, Yale, the Center for the Studies of the Person, Colorado, Chicago, MIT, SUNY at Stony Brook, St. John's College, and UC Santa Barbara and San Diego.

I should tell you that
^I also program evening courses in San Diego. We can't usually afford to bring a national figure from the East to lecture. The air fare alone makes it financially impractical. I recently re-introduced the concept of statewide programming among our many campus Extension offices. With from three to seven campuses sharing the cross-country air fare, we found we could import better talent. Normally we invite the person out to lecture for a week or two when it is freezing in the East, and we do get lots of acceptances. But again those persons who get to listen to this national figure total at most 1500, if that.

If a small group of campuses can afford better speakers by pooling travel money, think what the national programmer can do with the much larger amounts available through foundations and similar sources. Remember

what UCSD did with Courses By Newspaper, for example. The cost of talent per student becomes ridiculously small, and the best teachers are made available to everyone. Instead of lecturing to 20 persons in a local classroom or a few hundred on a group of campuses, this man or woman can lecture to millions without leaving his home or office and without delivering the lecture more than once.

On television Heifetz can demonstrate in the smallest high school how he plays the violin; Harold Urey can be made available through several media in your school; whom do you want? Anyone can--or should--be yours through national programming.

Well, sure, but won't that put teachers out of work in this declining market for teachers? You know it never happens that way. Remember the first video-taped credit courses which were going to put everybody out of work. The opposite happened.

The market for courses--and therefore teachers--is expanding naturally as people live longer and retire earlier. National programming will expand the audience further by turning on those who were turned off; by eventually developing better, more exciting, and hopefully almost irresistable programs; and by making courses available everywhere in a variety of new ways.

Okay, so won't that put programmers out of work? I'm a programmer, and I don't think so. I'm appalled by the fact that there are thousands of programmers across the country each duplicating the programs of others in adult high schools and in evening extension programs. How much better if each programmer has a few national courses available to him at little or no cost but with the best of teachers and the most innovative or needed of subjects. He will then be free to concentrate on strictly local needs, including a weekly radio or TV program in which local experts react to the latest newspaper lesson, for one example. And again, national programming will be constantly increasing his potential audience. There is another benefit too: as his audience becomes more sophisticated, so necessarily will his programming. Every programmer wants the opportunity to present better courses. (Just ask him.)

The future for national programming is unlimited as well as almost untouched. So far as I know we have had TV's Sunrise Semester, which unfortunately does come on at sunrise, and one Course By Newspaper. I think we're going to have a lot more.

Let me tell you now about one new credit course project in a different medium and one little used classroom outlet.

I want to introduce this with a quotation too: "The library is potentially the largest adult education center in the country. Yet library traffic goes down while all other educational facilities are over-strained.

"There are at least 15,000 libraries in this country that now function primarily as repositories for the printed word. Yet, if the library uses the new media properly in conjunction with this nation's schools, it will automatically become the largest adjunctive campus in the world.

"It is now possible to add 15,000 satellite campuses that are already functioning and paid for."

That quote is from Calvin Fox of the Center for Cassette Studies in North Hollywood, and he is doing something with and about the library.

As you might imagine, UCSD Extension and the National Endowment for the Humanities have received all sorts of proposals relating to and stemming from Courses By Newspaper and its national programming concept. So far only one has been new, different, needed, and valuable enough to get me really turned on.

Calvin Fox and his Center for Cassette Studies are already using the libraries to distribute audio cassettes which make great speakers, other talented persons, and exciting concepts available to everyone. Just as there was never before a national Course By Newspaper, so has there never before been a national, credit Cassette Course, which would use audio cassettes distributed through libraries in combination with a book or reader, a study guide, and a teacher's manual. Now these tools have been made available to all of us. Currently the key new portions work this way:

The Center for Cassette Studies has thousands of audio-cassettes in libraries from Los Angeles to Boston. They are issued as books. In fact, externally they look like books. [Hold up one] All you need to check one out is a library card.

These cassettes are not now organized into course form; they are issued individually, though they can be and are used as course supplements. Still the Los Angeles Public Library reports that audio cassettes are their largest circulation item. The downtown branch has the most users, apparently largely businessmen and -women who listen to the tapes during their many hours of freeway driving. The second largest usage is in Watts.

These cassettes are marketed to the libraries by Xerox and are accompanied by a machine that dubs copies quickly. No matter how many patrons want a particular tape, they all can have one almost immediately. And that's not true with books, as you know. Ever try to check out a best-seller? Or a recommended book for a large class?

The library patron may also take home the cassette and dub a copy for his own personal tape library, if he wishes.

This is to announce that the Center for Cassette Studies has funded UCSD Extension to prepare five experimental, national, credit courses using this exciting new concept of audio cassettes and printed materials and the library. The five courses are expected to be ready by Fall of 1975. I can't wait.

The only real expense is to the library which purchases one master copy of each audio-taped course with unlimited duplication rights and a free machine for that dubbing. The library should be happy to increase its circulation and service at a reasonable cost.

Each school--you--can sample the course in the library and presumably the accompanying books too. If the school wishes to adopt the course, it has only to list it in its catalogue, provide a teacher, and buy an instructor's manual.

Individual students may check the tapes out of the library with a card at no cost, and the student must also purchase the paperback books at a very reasonable cost.

Costs are minimal because again someone has provided funding for a national program. The courses will be of high academic quality, under the supervision of an excellent teacher and an Academic Advisory Committee of five professors. Each school can use all, any, or one of the courses in its own way: as a regular session course; as a "back up" to a regularly scheduled course; as an at-home course with two "contact" sessions in a central location; as a high school course for bright (and bored) seniors; or whatever.

Obviously I'm intrigued by the idea of Cassette Courses. I think their future is unlimited, because they are low in cost, easy to update, and remarkably compatible with other media.

Please write and let me know which courses you might want to have developed. Currently I'm planning to do courses that are needed (such as Women's Studies) but for which there is seldom a local teacher available. But we're still flexible.

Courses By Newspaper is still making news--good news for all of us--by bringing forth related programs that may grow bigger than their illustrious parent.

Thank you.

Caleb A. Lewis
Chicago, March 11, 1974

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